



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 December 2023

by N Teasdale BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/M5450/W/23/3324233

Whitefriars School, Whitefriars Avenue, Harrow HA3 5RQ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant full planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Ms Venetia Griffith (Heathland Whitefriars Federation) against the decision of London Borough of Harrow.
 - The application Ref P/3660/22, dated 20 October 2022, was refused by notice dated 9 January 2023.
 - The development proposed is replacement windows and doors to all elevations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for replacement windows and doors to all elevations at Whitefriars School, Whitefriars Avenue, Harrow HA3 5RQ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref P/3660/22, dated 20 October 2022, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Site Location Plan Drawing No. 5745/100 Revision A; Proposed Elevations Drawing No. 5745/201; Proposed Window Designs Drawing No. 5745/202.
 - 3) No development shall commence until details / samples of the replacement windows and doors hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details / samples.

Procedural Matters

2. The description of development in the above banner heading has been taken from the decision notice as this accurately describes the proposed development.
3. The officers' report refers to the location of the site within the Conservation Area. However, this is an error, and it has since been confirmed by the Council that the site does not fall within the Conservation Area.
4. There are a number of discrepancies on the plans listed on the decision notice and the plans submitted as part of this appeal. This is again an error, and the Council has clarified that the plans as submitted form the basis of this appeal.

5. An update to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been published dated 19 December 2023 but there are no material changes relevant to the substance of the appeal.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the locally listed school building and surrounding area, including whether it would preserve its special interest.

Reasons

7. The appeal property comprises a primary school building which is a two-storey Edwardian property located in a prominent position fronting onto Whitefriars Avenue with an overall symmetrical design. There is a separate secondary school building to the west and south of the school which is of more modern construction and the surrounding area comprises both residential and commercial uses with a range of window and door detailing/materials.
8. The building is locally listed, and I have had regard to paragraph 209 of the Framework which explains that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
9. The existing windows and doors in the building for the greater part comprise timber although there are a number of UPVC and/or aluminium features within the elevations as indicated on the submitted plans and evident at the time of my site visit. The proposed development seeks replacement of the timber windows and doors with double glazed aluminium units. The officer's report sets out that the property has architectural and historic interest as highlighted by its local list description which refers to the original timber sash windows and thus considered to form part of the special character and appearance and the special interest of the locally listed building.
10. I acknowledge the appellants' claims which fundamentally questions the value of the site as a locally listed building including its special interest. However, at my site visit, I still found the building to be aesthetically pleasing when viewed within the street scene particularly on approaches from Whitefriars Avenue. This was largely due to its Edwardian design including two-storey centre and gabled wings and overall symmetrical design constructed of yellow stock brick and features clay tiled roof, gauged red brick arches and white render key above windows and two original partial curved roof dormers. These features are detailed within the local list description and whilst the listing refers to the original timber sash windows, the replacement of this feature does not necessarily mean that it would be harmful as a balanced judgement is required having regard to the significance of this non-designated heritage asset which includes many other key architectural and historic features as well as the scale of any harm or loss.
11. The proposed replacement windows would be of a matching, like-for-like manner as far as practicably possible including the overall window arrangement, format, design, and scale. Whilst I acknowledge the comments

regarding the materials, proportions, and traditional methods of opening as well as the flatness of new glass and need for thicker sections and glazing bars, I am satisfied that overall, the proposed window arrangement would not be so dissimilar or significantly change the overall appearance of the building in a way which would adversely affect the visual appearance of the building or surrounding area. That said, I do find it necessary to condition further details in relation to the windows and doors including samples to ensure the replacement would indeed be a suitable match. Given the nature of the works, the detailing and special interest of the overall building largely remains unaltered and would therefore still be appreciated. It would therefore suitably preserve the main characteristic features of the school building and surrounding area and would not appear discordant when viewed in context of the use of UPVC and/or aluminium features that already exist within the existing elevations and nearby school building as well as the diverse appearance of other windows/doors nearby which are visible within the street scene and comprise UPVC.

12. I have had due regard to issues associated with the existing windows including their poor condition and health and safety matters which is of great importance given that the building is an operating primary school as well as energy efficiency/ventilation and the difficulty and cost to maintain them in reasonable condition without significant and regular investment. I was able to see some of the issues associated with the windows/doors at my site visit and whilst there may be alternative options available including repair and upgrading which have indeed been considered, I am sufficiently persuaded by the evidence before me and my own observations on site, that the other options have been discounted for sufficient reasoning and the proposed development is a reasonable option in this case to address the issues identified.
13. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposed development would not unacceptably affect the character and appearance of the locally listed school building and surrounding area and would preserve its special interest. It would therefore accord with Policy HC 1 1C of The London Plan, 2021, Policies CS1. B and D of the Harrow Core Strategy, 2012 and Policies DM 1 and DM 7 of the Harrow Council Development Management Policies, 2013 which together, amongst other matters, requires all development to respond positively to the local and historic context, reinforcing the positive attributes of local distinctiveness. For the same reasons, the proposed development would accord with the aspirations of the Framework relating to achieving well-designed and beautiful places as well as conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Conditions

14. I have included the standard time for commencement of development, and a plans condition in the interests of certainty. I have also attached a condition relating the details / samples of the replacement windows and doors which is necessary in the interests of the satisfactory appearance of the development given the status of the locally listed building as a non-designated heritage asset.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above and having had regard to the development plan as a whole and all other matters raised, the appeal should be allowed.

N Teasdale

INSPECTOR